Domestic violence can take many forms, but its goal is always the same: Batterers want to control you through fear. They do this by regularly abusing you physically, sexually, psychologically and economically. Here are forms of domestic violence you may have experienced:

**Physical Abuse:** Hitting, slapping, kicking, strangling (often referred to as choking), pushing, punching, beating.

**Verbal Abuse:** Constant criticism, making humiliating remarks, not responding to what you are saying, name calling, yelling, swearing, interrupting.

**Sexual Violence:** Forcing sex, demanding sexual acts that you do not want to perform, degrading treatment.

**Isolation:** Creates difficulty for you to see friends & relatives, monitoring phone calls, reading mail, controlling where you go, taking your car keys.

**Coercion:** Makes you feel guilty, pushing you into decisions, sulking, manipulating children and other family members, insists on being right, making up impossible rules and punishing you for breaking them.

**Harassment:** Following or Stalking, embarrassing you in public, constantly checking up on you, refusing to leave when asked.

**Economic Control:** Not paying bills, refusing to give you money, not letting you work, interfering with your job, refusing to work and support the family.

**Threats and Intimidation:** Threatens to harm you, the children, family members and pets; using physical size to intimidate, keeping weapons and threatening to use them.

**Destruction of Property:** Destroying furniture, punching walls, throwing things, breaking things.

**Self-destructive Behavior:** Abusing drugs or alcohol, threatens self-harm or suicide, driving recklessly, deliberately doing things that will cause fear.

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UNDERSTANDING THE PATTERN OF ABUSE AND HOW YOU ARE AFFECTED

At times, victims can begin to predict when the violence will occur again. A pattern has been found to exist, this is shown below.

Tension Building Phase - Tension and anger build up in the abuser. You may find yourself doing everything you can not to upset him/her.

Battering Incident - When the abuser can no longer handle tension and again they explode. An incident takes place. It may include battering, sexual abuse or verbal abuse. It may even include all three of the forms of abuse.

Honeymoon Phase - After an abusive incident, the abuser may feel guilty and maybe even ashamed. They may apologize and promise it will never happen again. The abuser may bring you or the children gifts and life may be all that you dreamed it could be, until the tension builds up again in the abuser and the cycle continues.

FACTORS THAT SIGNAL A FATAL OR LIFE THREATENING INJURY

As a victim of domestic violence, you need to know that there are factors that may signal a life threatening injury in the near future.

- A previous severe or life threatening attack
- Any past attempts to strangle you
- Recent abuse by a partner. In a research study, half the women who were killed had experienced violence within 30 days of the homicide, some within 1 or 2 days.
- Increasingly frequent violent attacks increase the risk of a fatal attack
- Abusers threaten with a weapon. One study has found that women who were threatened or assaulted with a gun or other weapon were 20 times more likely than other women to be murdered.
- Abuse of alcohol and/or drugs. In one study, research showed that more than two-thirds of the homicide offenders used alcohol, drugs or both during the incident.
- For a minority of women, about 1 in 5, the life threatening incident will be the first physical violence they experience from their partner. One recognizable risk factor for these abusers is controlling behavior or extreme jealousy.

SAFETY MEASURES WHILE YOU’RE IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

If you are living with the person who is battering you, here are some things you can do to ensure your and your children’s safety.

- Have important phone numbers memorized, i.e. friends and relatives whom you can call in an emergency. If your children are old enough, teach them important phone numbers, including when and how to dial 9-1-1.
- Keep this brochure in a safe place, where your batterer won’t find it, but where you can get it when you need to review it.
- If you can, open your own bank account.
- Stay in touch with friends and family. Get to know your neighbors. Resist any temptation to cut yourself off from people, even if you feel like you just want to be left alone.
- Rehearse your escape plan until you know it by heart.
- Leave a set of car keys, extra money, a change of clothes and copies of the following documents, with a trusted friend or relative.
  - Your and your children’s birth certificates
  - Your children’s school and medical records
  - Bank books
  - Welfare identification
  - Passports or green cards
  - Your social security card
  - Lease agreements - mortgage payment books
  - Insurance papers
  - Important addresses and telephone numbers
  - Any other important documents
  - ID/Driver’s License
  - Keys (home, car and safety deposit box)
  - Medicine
  - Phone Card

SAFETY AFTER YOU HAVE LEFT THE RELATIONSHIP

Once you no longer live with the batterer, here are some things you can do to enhance you and your children’s safety.

- Change the locks.
- Install as many security features as possible in your home. These might include metal doors and gates, security alarm system, peep hole in the door, smoke detectors and outside lights.
- Inform neighbors that your former partner is not welcome on the premises. Ask them to call the police if they see that person loitering about your property or watching your home.
- Make sure the people who care for your children are very clear about who does and who does not have permission to pick up your children.
- Obtain an order of protection from the court and have it served. Keep it near you at all times, and make sure friends and neighbors have copies to show the police.
- Let your co-workers know about the situation. Ask them to warn you if they observe that person around. Vary your route to and from work.
- Avoid the stores, banks, and businesses you used when you were living with the batterer.
- Get counseling. Attend support groups. Do whatever it takes to form a supportive network that will be there when you need it.
- Carry a cell phone with you at all times so if you need to call 9-1-1 you can.